

HOW ISRAEL TREATS HER ARABS

by Derek Tozer

The Arabs living in Israel are denied political and human rights.

THE DEEP and searing hatred felt by Egyptian leaders for Israel has not been fully revealed by the Western Press, because to do so would involve high-lighting the causes: the setting up of a Jewish State in what has been an Arab country for centuries, and the savage, inhuman and vindictive treatment by the Israelis of those Arabs now remaining in the country. The fact that this makes war in the Middle East one day virtually inevitable is ignored.

In his recently published book, "The Sphinx Awakes," Judge Gerald Sparrow detects in Britain, Canada and America "a reluctance, almost a fear, to state the real facts concerning the persecution of the Arabs by the Jews in Palestine. An American politician," he relates, "greatly respected, said: 'Yes, we know, but the truth is dynamite. The Press here would tear one to bits if one told it.'"

The 175,000-odd Arabs of the



Holy Land who stayed behind after the expulsion of the greater majority of their fellow-countrymen have been subjected to patent discrimination, in law as well as in practice. The unofficial persecution—an anti-Semitism directed against the Arabs—is persuasive. This "undercurrent of ill feeling," as Mr. John Cogley states, "is not a matter of law" but rather "a question of atmosphere." Mr. Cogley also emphasizes the failure of the Israeli authorities to curb terrorists and extremists.

"No one in authority in Israel," he observes, "has proposed that the murderous private citizens be tracked down and punished. As it

is true in the earlier case of the frightful Deir Yassin massacre, and in the killing of the UN mediator, Count Bernadotte, terrorists have gone scot-free again; worst of all, apparently no one in authority is even vaguely interested in apprehending them."

The official policy of the Government is unequivocal. Arabs, like the Jews in Nazi Germany, are officially "Class-B" citizens, a fact which is recorded on their identity cards. To qualify for such citizenship they must prove continuous residence in Israeli-held territory since the establishment of the State, must have a knowledge of Hebrew, and must be approved by the Ministry of the Interior. It has been established that no more than ten percent of the Arabs of Israel would qualify for citizenship under this law, on which William Zukerman commented in the *Jewish Newsletter*: "Jews . . . may become citizens automatically. They may even hold dual citizenship . . . But the 170,000 Arabs in Israel, who have lived on that soil for centuries and have never left it, are limited in their rights to acquire citizenship. A more flagrant case of discrimination is hard to find even in the annals of the chauvinistic twentieth century."

FURTHER, the areas in which the Arabs are concentrated, and only those areas (containing altogether 145,000 Arabs), have been

placed under military rule. The consequences are manifold. Civil rights are virtually suspended. The Israeli Government dismisses due process of law when proceeding against the Arabs: there is no Habeas Corpus. "The residents of these governorates," writes Mr. Don Peretz, "live within a matrix of legal restrictions which fix their movements into, out of, and within the area, and give the army authority to banish legal residents and to confiscate their property, to remove whole villages from one zone to another, and to try in military summary courts individuals who violate its regulations." The *New York Times* reports that the Military Government sentences believed trouble-makers "without trial, on the basis of the emergency regulations."

The restriction of movement applied strictly against Arabs includes even Arab members of the Knesset [parliament]. "An Arab cannot even go from Nazareth to Cana, a distance of six miles, without a permit," writes Dr. Fey. Mr. Hal Lehrman describes the situation of the Arabs of Jaffa as follows: "The Arabs are concentrated inside the small but neat Ajemi quarter; they live in a kind of reverse segregation; they need passes to go out, and Jews need passes to go in . . . It may be a peculiar word to use but 'Ghetto' is the one I think of for the guarded enclosure where Arabs are con-

centrated in Jaffa and other once-important towns."

The Arabs are denied basic political rights. They have no political parties. Their affairs are handled by a dozen Government Departments, to the detriment of their welfare. Economic, social and cultural rights are similarly affected. "Job opportunities," according to Mr. John Cogley, "are rigidly restricted." There are two price levels for agricultural products, one for Israelis and another for Arabs, according to Rabbi Lazarson. Educational facilities are discriminatory, the Arab schools being the poorest in the country, although the Arabs pay taxes like everyone else. Text-books are scarce and the teachers are unqualified.

THE confiscation of Arab property by the Israeli authorities must be cited. Laws enacted by the Knesset authorize the Government to confiscate, under one head or another, the property of all Arabs. The measures adopted are extraordinary, even in modern times. The Military Governor will declare an Arab area a prohibited zone, thus debarring entry to any Arab wishing to tend his land. The 1953 law is then invoked, and agricultural lands become liable for confiscation, since the owners have failed to tend and till their lands themselves. This means that the property of the Arabs automatically becomes the property of the

State. The land of refugees, known ironically as "absentees," is sequestered and sold to immigrant Jews at a nominal price. Nor can the Arabs always secure redress from the courts; often when courts decide in their favour, the decision is ignored by the authorities. "The military forces at times ignore even the decisions of the highest Israeli courts," writes Rabbi Lazarson. "For instance an Arab takes his claim to home or land to court. The court confirms his claim and orders his property restored. The military destroys the property on grounds of 'security' and no one does anything about it."

This is Israel at work. What a vast contrast between this and the claim made that Israel represents the most democratic, equitable and progressive area in the Middle East! "It seems grotesque," comments Judge Sparrow in his book, "that the Jews, so recently released from race persecution and the whole vile machinery of the Gestapo by British, American and Russian Armies, should, almost within a decade, be practising the very same odious doctrines themselves. There is not a single malpractice of the Jewish Government to-day that had not its counterpart and inspiration in Nazi Germany."

The Charter of Human Rights, it would seem, was not intended to apply to the Arabs of Israel. They would no doubt be classed by the Israeli as "sub-men!"